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SUBJECT: ANBAR PRT: IRAQ AWAKENING LEADER SUPPORTS  
SUNNI-SHIA RECONCILIATION

Classified By: Anbar PRT Team Leader James Soriano for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is a PRT Anbar reporting cable.

[1](#)2. (C) The Iraq Awakening Movement (SAI) will name Sunni candidates to fill the vacancies created by the August 1 walkout of the Cabinet by the Tawafuq Bloc if the latter cannot find common ground with the Maliki government, SAI leader Sheikh Ahmed Abu Risha told senior MNF-West representatives and PRT leader at his Ramadi compound on October 15.

[1](#)3. (C) Ahmed said that he plans to meet Tawafuq leader Adnan Dulaimi in Baghdad in the coming days to discuss the latter's approach to Maliki. He will urge Dulaimi to find a way to re-enter the Cabinet. If Dulaimi lacks the leadership to do so, Ahmed said that the SAI "will not leave the field empty," meaning it will nominate candidates of its own to fill the Tawafuq vacancies. Ahmed declined to speculate as to when the SAI would step in, saying only that much depends on what Dulaimi would say at their forthcoming meeting.

[1](#)4. (C) Ahmed chided Dulaimi for staging the prolonged Cabinet walkout, which he considers a miscalculation, and for long being associated with anti-Shia and anti-Coalition sentiment. Dulaimi should moderate his message and engage Maliki, Ahmed indicated.

#### Meeting with Shia Leaders

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[1](#)5. (SBU) Two days earlier, Ahmed hosted a visit by Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council leader Ammar Al-Hakim and a group of a dozen or more tribal sheikhs and other notables from Karbala and Najaf. Ahmed told us that he had urged his visitors to guard against Iranian influence in southern Iraq and not to accept offers of Iranian "investment." Iranians may visit the holy sites as pilgrims, Ahmed reportedly said, but should not be allowed to buy Iraqi land.

[1](#)6. (SBU) Ahmed reportedly called on his visitors to oppose the presence of militias in their provinces and sought Ammar's acquiescence to open an SAI office in Karbala. "We are not taking votes away from you," he jokingly recalled his telling Ammar, referring to the SAI's goal of becoming a non-sectarian party.

[1](#)7. (SBU) When one of the visitors sought to entertain the host by reciting a poem that had an anti-American tone, Ahmed stopped the performance, insisting that the Coalition be described as friends. Under the leadership of Ahmed's late brother, Sattar Abu Risha, who was killed by a bomb near his Ramadi home on September 13, the SAI had long described Coalition Forces as "friendly forces" in its public pronouncements.

Meeting with Karbala Governor Aqeel

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¶8. (SBU) Ahmed confirmed that he expects to host a visit to Ramadi by Karbala Governor Aqeel Al-Khazali and a large delegation of Karbali tribal sheikhs on October 20. Earlier in the day, Anbar Governor Ma'amoun Sami Rasheed also confirmed the planned meeting with Aqeel, which is the follow up to their July 18 meeting at REO Hillah.

Comment

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¶9. (C) Ahmed's willingness to be more active on the Cabinet impasse is a shift in his previous position. In recent weeks, both he and his late brother had affirmed to us their support for Tawafuq and deflected our queries about their intentions. Such posturing is to be expected in front of a foreigner. But in the time that Ahmed took over the reins of the SAI on September 13, he has moved on several fronts to assert his leadership, seeking to replace Anbar's provincial chief police with one of SAI's choosing, playing host to Shia tribal and political leaders on at least two occasions, and meeting with PM Maliki on October 1. Prior to his taking over the helm at SAI, Ahmed, 42, was typically called on as the lead interlocutor with the Iraqi Islamic Party. He is scheduled to accompany a group of eight Anbari notables to the US on an International Visitors Program beginning in Washington on October 29.

CROCKER